

Washington, DC - A bi-partisan group of 77 lawmakers organized by Congressman Earl Blumenauer (D-Ore.) called last week for a series of congressional delegations to the Darfur region of Sudan in an effort to highlight the ongoing genocide that has killed an estimated 100,000 people and displaced close to two million others.

“As the crisis in the Darfur region of Sudan continues to intensify, members of both parties have come together to declare the situation in Darfur to be genocide and to demand action to save lives and protect human rights,” the lawmakers said in a letter to House Speaker Dennis Hastert (R-Ill.), Majority Leader Tom DeLay (R-Texas), and Minority Leader Nancy Pelosi (D-Calif.), “One of the simplest steps for Congress to continue playing a positive role would be for Members to experience the tragedy of Darfur firsthand.”

Specifically, the letter asks that the leadership of the House of Representatives make it a priority to sponsor, over the next session of Congress, a series of congressional delegations over the next year to visit Sudan and the refugee camps in Chad. Blumenauer argued that providing the opportunity for every Member to visit would be an important step, not just in understanding the situation, but in ending the genocide.

Blumenauer believes that this series of delegations throughout the next session of Congress would serve to educate and motivate Members to action, as well as attract news media and give a sign of hope to the hundreds of thousands of people whose families are at risk. These high profile visits will place pressure on the Government of Sudan and give notice to Khartoum that they cannot ignore the pressure of the international community nor evade responsibility for the crimes in Darfur.

“Over the past few months, the fighting in Sudan has intensified and the need for food, shelter and improved sanitation became even more critical,” the lawmakers continued in their letter. “As displaced people continue to flee for safety, their appeal for security should not go unanswered.”